



# Pathologists' Assistant Student Handbook 2025-2026

Department of Pathology and Laboratory  
Medicine, University of Calgary



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## Introduction

The Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of Calgary, in affiliation with Alberta Precision Laboratories, is pleased to offer a Master of Pathologists' Assistant degree. This two year (22 months not counting assigned holidays) , course-based Master's program incorporates graduate level anatomy, physiology, and pathology courses with practical, hands-on experience working in an anatomical pathology laboratory, on a backbone of scientific and clinical research. This program fills a void in Western Canada to train a sorely needed group of professionals to assist in anatomic pathology.

So, what is a Pathologists' Assistant? A Pathologists' Assistant is a highly trained and skilled health care professional who functions under the supervision of a pathologist and provides a wide range of technical support and services, including the examination of surgically removed specimens (referred to as grossing), and dissection of bodies during autopsies. Pathologists' Assistants also contribute to the maintenance of the highest standards of quality and excellence within the laboratory. These duties were traditionally performed by pathologists, but with the right skills and training, Pathologists' Assistants can take over these duties and allow pathologists to spend more time on complex diagnostic issues. This allows for a more appropriate and responsible use of health care resources.

## A Note about the Handbook

The Handbook is a living document and will be continually updated to address the changing environment of the Pathologists' Assistant program. Current students will be made aware of updates as they occur. The Handbook references the policies and procedures of the University of Calgary and Alberta Precision Laboratories. These resources are also available online.

## Mission Statement

The University of Calgary Pathologists' Assistant Program strives to provide a world class education to willing, motivated students, in an academically and clinically stimulating environment, to attain the skills and knowledge to perform the duties of a Pathologists' Assistant with precision, accuracy, and social responsibility.

## Goals

The primary goal of this program is to provide students with an opportunity to become a pathologists' assistant, with the ultimate goal being to play a part in improving the provision of clinical laboratory health care in Canada.

For each student, the program has the following goals:

- To, at the end of the two-year program, possess excellent technical and clinical skills in surgical and autopsy pathology in the adult and pediatric setting
- To, at the end of the two-year program, have functional knowledge of human embryology and anatomy, human physiology, and cellular and systems pathology

## General Objectives

Upon completion of the program, the following competencies must be achieved:

- The student will integrate the theoretical knowledge from the 1<sup>st</sup> year courses into their role as a Pathologists' Assistant.
- The student will perform the technical skills required of a Pathologists' Assistant including, but not limited to, autopsy pathology techniques (hospital, forensic, and pediatric), gross surgical pathology techniques (adult and pediatric) and photography.
- The student will demonstrate excellent communication skills both written and oral as it pertains to the duties of a Pathologists' Assistant.
- The student will apply knowledge of various educational methods to future educational events that they may be involved in.
- The student will interpret medical histories and collect ancillary tests when appropriate. The student will recognize the collaboration between anatomic pathology and general pathology (medical microbiology, toxicology, clinical

chemistry, clinical hematology, flow cytometry etc.) and will apply the appropriate protocols for acquiring and submitting samples to those laboratory areas.

- The student will practice managerial skills as they pertain to the management of a laboratory, with focus on the appropriate use of laboratory resources, quality management, and management of laboratory information.
- The student will employ safe work practices and demonstrate their adherence to the highest standards of personal and patient safety.
- The student will perform the duties of a Pathologists' Assistant in an ethical manner, with the utmost regard for patient confidentiality, privacy, respect, and safety.
- The student will recognize their role as a professional, demonstrating integrity, respect, honesty, compassion, accountability, and insight to personal limitations.

## Program Overview

The program starts in September of each year with an orientation day which covers a general overview of the program, WHIMIS training, ID badges, N95 mask fitting, and a meet and greet with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. In the fall of the first year, students take graduate level human anatomy, human physiology and human pathology courses. An online course in medical terminology is also completed in the fall semester. In the winter semester, students take Cellular Mechanisms of Disease, Human Histology, continue the human pathology course and complete an introduction to grossing and autopsy course.

Practical rotations start in the spring semester of first year, with a general introduction into the workflow of the pathology laboratory and an introduction to grossing and the software programs used. Then students move on to adult autopsy (medical and forensic), adult surgical pathology, and pediatric autopsy and surgical pathology during their second year. In the fall semester at the beginning of the second year the students select topics for their special project which is due in April of the second year.

Upon successful completion of the courses and practical rotations students will be granted the degree of Master of Pathologists' Assistant.

## Clinical Affiliates

- Alberta Precision Laboratories
- Alberta Health Services
- Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Alberta
- Saskatchewan Health Authority

## Essential Functions

Admission to the Pathologists' Assistant program is dependent on the ability to perform Essential Functions as follows:

**Observation.** A student must be able to observe accurately at a distance and at close hand, and to describe anatomic features and the appearance of tissues. The student must be able to observe demonstrations and participate in experiments, examinations, dissections and processing of specimens. The student must be able to use a variety of tools, equipment and chemicals as well as different types of equipment in order to

consistently and accurately prepare specimens. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision and other sensory modalities.

**Communication.** A student must be able to communicate effectively with physicians, and other members of the health care team. Communication includes speaking and listening, reading and writing, in English. The student must be able to make accurate and appropriate entries in medical records, documents and reports, and to understand and implement instructions in a complete and timely manner working alone or with others. A student must be able to speak, hear and observe by sight in order to elicit information and describe characteristics appearance and detect and interpret sounds necessary to ensure safety in a clinical or laboratory facility.

**Sensory and Motor Coordination and Function.** A student must have sufficient sensory and motor function to execute movements reasonably required to conduct all phases of autopsy performance and dissection of surgical specimens. Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and accurate coordination of the senses of touch and vision. A student must be able to stand for long periods of time, lift heavy objects, carry heavy objects, pull, push, reach and bend while performing autopsy and dissection of surgical specimens. A student must be able to perform laboratory protocols, work with standard laboratory materials, reach and manipulate equipment and tools, and put on and remove personal protective equipment.

**Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities.** A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize. Problem solving, a critical skill of the Pathologists' Assistant, requires all of these intellectual abilities. A student must be able to identify significant findings from examination and retain and recall information in an accurate and timely manner. A student must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures. Good judgment is essential; a student must be able to identify and communicate their knowledge to others when appropriate.

**Behavioral and Social Attributes.** A student must possess the emotional maturity and health required for full use of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the awareness of the importance of the responsibilities of a Pathologists' Assistant. A student is expected to accept appropriate suggestions and criticism and to take corrective or remedial measure when appropriate. A student must act with integrity, concern for others and respect for the dignity of the profession.



## Milestones

- ***Medical Terminology (1<sup>st</sup> year online)***

Understanding medical terminology is critical for the clinical practicum rotations in the second year of the MDPA program. Students must complete a medical terminology course within two years of starting the MDPA program or within the first year of the program. If students have taken a medical terminology course within the last two years of starting the MDPA program they must provide proof of completion and course description for review. If students have not completed a medical terminology course, there is an online option through Canadian Red Cross or students can forward other options to the program director for review and approval.

This course discusses word construction and meanings that together characterize medical language. It teaches students to:

- Identify medical terms and words by their component parts
- Define the body structure and its systems, cavities, planes, and positions
- Explain the importance of medical terminology in healthcare professions
- Define and build the medical terms associated with the body systems

- ***Research Integrity Day***

Students must complete a Research Integrity Day (RI Day) workshop during their first year of their program. Recommended to register in a future workshop as soon as possible to ensure there is space available in your preferred session. Note: There are no sessions available in May-Aug.

- ***Sex and Gender in Research***

Students are required to complete a minimum of 1 of the 3 available CIHR Sex & Gender training modules during their first year of their program with the goal of appropriately assessing the conceptual integration of sex and gender into their research.

Please complete the most relevant module(s) and send a copy of the culminating certificate(s) of completion to your Graduate Program Administrator for filing.



## Course Descriptions

### ***Systems Physiology (1<sup>st</sup> year Fall Semester)***

Physiology is the study of how living organisms function and encompasses the integration of processes from molecules to the whole-organism. Designed to provide the student with fundamental principles and concepts about the normal function of the major human organ systems. At the end of this course, the student should be well equipped to apply his/her acquired knowledge to solve complex physiological problems related to integrative human physiology.

Course Coordinator: Dr. James E. Fewell, PhD, Professor

### ***Human Anatomy: Concepts, Exploration and Teaching (1<sup>st</sup> year Fall Semester)***

Introductory course for graduate students with an interest in mammalian morphology to human cadaver dissection, human anatomy concepts and teaching strategies within the medical professional curriculum. Weekly lectures and discussions supplement a cadaver dissection-based course intended for students interested in pursuing an academic career in a medically related field.

Course Coordinator: Dr. L. Willets, PhD, Assistant Professor

### ***Human Pathology (1<sup>st</sup> year Fall and Winter Semester)***

The first half of the course guides the student through principles of general pathology emphasizing the connection between these general disease principles and gross pathology. The second half of the course looks at diseases of specific organ systems and highlights the connection between understanding pathogenesis and gross dissection. At the end of the course the student should have a solid understanding of general and systemic pathology.

Course Coordinator: Bill Gorday PA(ASCP)<sup>cm</sup> (CCCPA-CCCAP), Clinical Assistant Professor

### ***Human Histology Practicum (1<sup>st</sup> year Winter Semester)***

An advanced histology class exploring the cellular architecture of the tissues and organs of the human body. The material will be covered with self study online virtual microscopy modules and small group practical sessions.

Course Coordinator: Christina Yang PA(ASCP)<sup>cm</sup> (CCCPA-CCCAP), Clinical Lecturer and Lorraine Royall (CCCPA-CCCAP), Clinical Lecturer

***Surgical Dissection and Autopsy Techniques (1<sup>st</sup> year Winter semester)***

An introduction to basic principles of the Pathologists' Assistant profession, designed to strategically facilitate the transition from the didactic lessons delivered in the first year of classes to the practical aspects applied in the second year. Immersed in interdisciplinary laboratory environments, students will be acquainted with various concepts affiliated with surgical pathology and autopsy services. Under the direct supervision of trained Pathologists' Assistants, students will be exposed to the daily workflow in the surgical pathology service, as they are introduced to basic human tissue dissection, description, and sampling techniques. An emphasis will be placed on the collaborative efforts from all healthcare personnel involved in the pre-analytic, analytic, and post-analytic gross room functions in terms of providing patient care through laboratory specimen management.

Course Coordinator: Ryan Healey PA(ASCP)<sup>cm</sup> (CCCPA-CCCAP), Clinical Lecturer

***Cellular Mechanisms of Disease (1<sup>st</sup> year Winter Semester)***

The cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying basic human disease processes and how these can be influenced by lifestyle and environmental factors. The ways in which this knowledge can be used in the laboratory diagnosis of disease.

Course Coordinator: Dr. Etienne Mahe MD, FRCPC, FCAP, Clinical Associate Professor

***Autopsy Pathology Practicum\* (2<sup>nd</sup> year, rotations throughout the year)***

An introduction to autopsy, including evisceration, dissection, and prosection, as well as exposure to gross pathology. At the conclusion of this practicum, a learner will be able to perform an autopsy under the guidance of a pathologist.

Course Coordinator: Dr. A. Bromley, MD, FRCPC, Assistant Professor

***Surgical Pathology Practicum\* (2<sup>nd</sup> year, rotations throughout the year)***

An introduction to surgical pathology, including preparing fresh specimens, traditional grossing, and use of ancillary techniques to aid in diagnosis. This practicum will also teach frozen section techniques. At the conclusion of this practicum, a learner will be able to prepare fresh specimens, gross specimens (level 1-6) and perform frozen sections with minimal supervision by the pathologist.

Course Coordinators: Dr. Travis Ogilvie, MD, FRCPC, Associate Professor and Bill Gorday (ASCP)<sup>cm</sup> (CCCPA-CCCAP), Clinical Assistant Professor

***Pathologists' Assistant Research Project (2<sup>nd</sup> year Fall and Winter semester)***

Guided work with practical research, encouraging independent thought and collaboration with pathologists and clinical colleagues. Requires completion of written reports and oral presentation on research performed.

Course Coordinators: Dr. Travis Ogilvie, MD, FRCPC, Associate Professor and Bill Gorday (ASCP)<sup>cm</sup> (CCCPA-CCCAP), Clinical Assistant Professor

***Pediatric Pathology Practicum\* (2<sup>nd</sup> year, rotations during Winter and Spring semesters)***

An introduction to pediatric pathology, which includes perinatal autopsy and placental pathology in addition to surgical pathology of pediatric specimens. At the conclusion of this practicum, a learner will be able to perform perinatal autopsy and placental pathology under supervision by the pathologist.

Course Coordinator: Christopher Horn (ASCP)<sup>cm</sup> (CCCPA-CCCAP)

***Integrated Pathologists' Assistant Skills (2<sup>nd</sup> year, Spring Semester)***

The course consists of a series of discussions and workshops that will provide practical knowledge of the Pathologists' Assistant profession as the students prepare to graduate and look for jobs. The primary focus will be on senior administrative components of the pathologists' assistant profession, learning about the various certifying bodies in Canada and the US, US and Canadian certification exams, and preparing to enter the job market.

Course Coordinator: Bill Gorday (ASCP)<sup>cm</sup> (CCCPA-CCCAP), Clinical Assistant Professor

In addition to the General Objectives listed above, specific objectives for each course are provided to students in the Course Syllabus with the first week of each course and throughout the course work.

\* All practical rotations occur within Alberta Precision Laboratories facilities which services over 1.5 million people of Southern Alberta as the sole provider of laboratory services for healthcare in the Calgary zone. In the unforeseeable event that applied experience cannot be guaranteed, arrangements will be made for the Pathologists' Assistant students to obtain applied experience at other sites throughout the province.

## **Exemptions from Required Courses**

All students are required to take all courses listed above. If a student has taken the exact course in previous studies within the last five (5) years, and achieved a mark equivalent to a 3.0 GPA, the student must request an exemption in writing to the Program Director. The request must be accompanied by documentation supporting the request.

Requests for exemptions based on equivalent courses taken outside the exact courses for this program will be evaluated on a case by case basis. It is the responsibility of the student to supply course documentation including, but not limited to, the course outline, course objectives, evaluation criteria, and marks. The Program Director will, in discussion with the Medical Director and PA Program Committee where necessary, provide the student with a written decision on exempt status within 2 weeks (14 calendar days) of the receipt of the request for exemption and all supporting documentation.

## **Evaluation**

A multifaceted, cumulative evaluation of the student's knowledge and skills is compiled throughout the program. This includes written examinations, seminars, presentations, papers, and participation for courses. During the practical rotations the students progress through their training by completing a series of modules that introduce basic skills and build upon those skills as they progress. Each module has specific objectives that must be completed and documented on a module specific checklist. During this time the student will receive feedback that they are to document on either the autopsy log form or surgical pathology log form. The student will also have to complete a module specific evaluation before they can progress to the next module. This way the student is

receiving constant feedback throughout their practical training experience. Pathologists are also encouraged to provide feedback regarding student's gross descriptions using the "Pathologists' Assistant Competence Assessment For Level 5/6 Gross" form. One on one meetings will be held with the students and associate director or director at two months into the practical rotation and then every three months after that. During these meetings general performance, professionalism and quality of work will be discussed and documented on the "Pathologists' Assistant Training Program Practical Rotation Meeting" form. At the meeting the student also has the opportunity to discuss their experience during the practical rotation and these comments are also documented on the form. Evaluations of students are based directly on objectives of the course and competencies outlined in this document. For fair and useful evaluation, the program uses the following principles of the evaluation process:

- Students are assessed on their achievement of defined objectives, either general or rotation specific
- Evaluations should address issues of psychomotor skills, affective skills, comprehension, and overall competence
- Assessments should be provided in a timely fashion
- Where possible, evaluations should be performed and reviewed with the student during the rotation, and the final evaluation should comment on the response of feedback, if applicable
- Preceptors/evaluators must provide direct comments and feedback to students or the Program Director where students are evaluated as not meeting expectations
- Evaluations are maintained by the Program Director and can be reviewed by a student at a time mutually agreeable by both the Program Director and the student
- Evaluations and feedback are for the betterment of the student and the program and therefore should focus on modifiable behaviours and be performed with the utmost respect for the student and program, in a constructive manner

Students are also encouraged and given the opportunity to evaluate instructors, preceptors, and the program. Students are expected to fill out an evaluation form at the end of each course. Feedback forms are sent to graduates between six months to a

year after graduation so that they can provide feedback after spending time working in the profession. All feedback forms are analyzed by the program director and presented at the annual curriculum and advisory committee meetings to identify areas for improvement.

## **Criteria for Passing, Failing, Progression, and Completion**

### ***Criteria for Passing:***

- Achieve an average GPA of 3.0 or better in all graduate credit courses
- Meet expectations as governed by the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective objectives of each module in the practical rotation. Documented on module specific checklists and module specific evaluation forms.

### ***Criteria for Failing:***

- Achieving an average GPA of less than 3.0 in all graduate credit courses
- Failing to meet expectations as governed by the objectives of each practical rotation module and module evaluation
- Failure to complete courses or practical rotations, in the absence of written documentation of a valid reasoning, will also result in failing

### ***Criteria for Progression:***

- To progress from Year 1 to Year 2, students must pass all courses based on the criteria listed above.

### ***Criteria for Completion***

To successfully complete the Masters of Pathologists' Assistant degree, a student must:

- Pass all courses with a minimum average of 3.0 GPA
- Successfully complete all practical rotations and meet expectations at each module evaluation
- Perform in accordance with the Policies and Procedures of the Medical Science Graduate Program
- Abide by the rules and regulations of the Pathologists' Assistant program, the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Alberta Precision Laboratories, the University of Calgary and its affiliates.
- Successful completion is not contingent upon passing any external certification or licensure exam.



## Tuition and Fees and Finances

Tuition, fees, late fees, and refunds are governed but the University of Calgary. Please review the most up to date tuition and fee information at: [www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/fees](http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/fees) and [P.2 Graduate Tuition and General Fees](#)

Refunds and withdrawals information can be found here:

[G.D.1 Graduate Registration](#)

[Refunds | Office of the Registrar | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](#)

## Clinical Assignment

All students admitted into the Pathologists' Assistant program will have their second year practical placement guaranteed within the practical rotations located in the cities of Calgary and/or Saskatoon and Regina. The number of students admitted into the program equals the number of clinical placement spots available and will not exceed the clinical placement availability. In Calgary the practical rotations will take place at the Foothills Hospital, Alberta Children's Hospital, South Health Campus and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. In Saskatoon the practical rotations will take place at Saskatoon City Hospital. In Regina the practical rotation will take place at Pasqua Hospital. In the rare situation that a major event causes disruption to all of the clinical training sites in Calgary, Saskatoon and Regina please see "Unforeseen Circumstances Affecting Clinical Placement" below.

## Clinical Work and Work Hours

During the practical rotations Pathologists' Assistant students will be given monthly shift schedules outlining their start time. Students are expected to show up on time for their shift and if unable to do so they must contact the department, associate director or director informing them that they will be late or unable to attend that day.

Students are never to be substituted for clinical staff in relation to staff scheduling, sick leave, unfilled positions or staff vacation.

Pathologists' Assistant students are not required to participate in practical learning opportunities outside of regular laboratory hours. If students choose to participate in practical learning opportunities outside of these hours, they must obtain approval from the staff with whom they are working, and there must be appropriate and adequate



supervision and assistance available. Students may be denied the request for after hours learning opportunities if supervision is not available. During the practical rotations the Pathologists' Assistant students will be able to do clinical work while under the direct supervision of a pathologist or staff pathologists' assistant. There must always be an assigned staff member(s) with the student; a student cannot do clinical work alone. It is a written expectation in the practical course modules that students will ask for direction when unsure of how to proceed.

## **Attendance and Vacation Policy and Procedures**

The general graduate student regulations as outlined by the University of Calgary are to be followed. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the graduate student regulations. As per the University of Calgary guidelines graduate students are entitled two weeks of annual vacation. A "Pathologists' Assistant Program Request for Absence" form must be filled out at least two weeks before the dates requested and submitted to the associate director or director of the program. Approval of leave requests is at the discretion of the associate director or director. If a request is not approved a specific reason will be documented on the "Pathologists' Assistant Program Request for Leave" form.

### **Attendance during Practical Rotation:**

During the practical rotation it is expected that the student will show up on time as outlined in their schedule for that rotation. If for any reason that the student cannot make their scheduled time he or she must call the area of their current placement and notify them. If the student wants time off during the practical rotation they must fill out a "Pathologists' Assistant Program Request for Leave" form and submit it to the associate director or director at least two weeks before their requested dates. The demands and time frame of the particular practical rotation that the student is in will be considered before the request is approved. If a student is absent for more than four days beyond the two weeks vacation **for any reason** their performance through the program will be reviewed by the associate director and director. In these situations, the student may be required to make up the time and the conditions will be outlined by the associate director or director. It is not acceptable to not notify the department, associate director or director about an absence. Such an incidence will be discussed with the student by the associate director and/or the director and documented on the "Pathologists' Assistant Training Program Practical Rotation Meeting" form.

**Sick Time:**

If the student is not feeling well he or she must call the area of their current placement and notify them. Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation for prolonged absences. Students cannot be required to provide specific supporting documentation, such as a medical note. Instructors cannot currently ask students for documentation to support absences in academic courses.

The [regulation](#) allowing this documentation to be requested has been suspended through to the end of the summer 2023 term. The university's program for providing [statutory declarations](#) has also been suspended through to the end of the summer 2023 term. ( [FAQs for Students | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](#) )

Falsification of any supporting documentation will be taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action through the Academic Discipline regulations or the Student Non-Academic Misconduct policy. If absenteeism and punctuality become a problem it will be discussed with the student and documented on the "Pathologists' Assistant Training Program Practical Rotation Meeting" form. In the event that the rate of absenteeism impedes the ability of a student to complete a practical module the student must make up the time and successfully complete the module. If this is not possible the situation will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. If a student experiences extended or severe illness it will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

**Leaves for Other Reasons:**

Compassionate leave due to death or illness of loved ones will be allowed. Leave for parental obligations will be allowed. In all situations the associate director or program director should be contacted as soon as possible. Missed time may need to be made up by the student and will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

**Rules and Regulations, Causes for Dismissal, Appeals Procedures**

Students of the Pathologists' Assistant Program are expected to abide by the Policies and Procedures of Graduate Science Education and the general university policies and code of conduct as outlined by the Student Conduct Office [Policy | Student Conduct Office | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](#) .

During clinical rotations, students are expected to abide by the clinical site policies and procedures, which are available on the internal websites of clinical placements, and/or are reviewed as part of first day orientation/checklists and taught by clinical site trainers.

[Code of Conduct \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](http://albertahealthservices.ca)

[Workplace Expectations Policy SHA-06-007.pdf \(saskhealthauthority.ca\)](#)

When a student is not in compliance with the rules and regulations, he or she will be corrected by the instructor or preceptor. Depending on the severity or frequency of the infraction, at the discretion of the instructor or preceptor, a Disciplinary Form will be filed with the Program Director. All Disciplinary Forms are required to be disclosed to the student, and the student must sign off that he or she is aware of the disciplinary form and agrees to conform to the alteration of behaviour suggested.

Every attempt will be made by the program to ensure the successful completion of the program by the student. Causes for dismissal are as follows:

- Inability to obtain criteria for passing in two or more courses
- Inability to obtain criteria for progressing in two consecutive years
- Inability to obtain criteria for graduation in three consecutive years

Accumulation of Disciplinary Forms may also lead to dismissal. This process is case dependent, and memorandums of understanding will be developed between the student and the program during these cases to ensure the student is treated fairly, and has an opportunity to exhibit corrected behaviours.

In the event of egregious or unlawful behaviours, including but not limited to desecration or indignity to the body of a decedent, desecration or indignity to a surgically resected specimen, breaches of confidentiality, inattendance to chain of custody, harassment, assault, or theft of material or intellectual property, a move to dismiss the student may be presented to the PA Program Committee, as well as the University or Alberta Precision Laboratories. Each such incident will be investigated by the appropriate body, according to each individual entities policies and procedures, with the involvement ombudsperson as requested.

Appeals of grade or graduate studies rulings are dealt with in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Information regarding the appeals process can be found here:

[Appeals | Faculty of Graduate Studies | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](#)

## **A Note about Social Media**

Social media is pervasive in our current culture, and while it can present important opportunities to enhance education, research, and health care, boundaries of appropriate use are sometimes blurry. For the purposes of the Pathologists' Assistant program, specifically relating to patient confidentiality but also related to professionalism in general, the student is reminded that one must assume all content posted to the Internet is public and accessible to all. Absolutely no patient information should be shared or referenced on social media at any time under any circumstances. As healthcare professionals in training, students are recommended to protect their own reputation and the reputation of the profession with responsible use of social media. Personal phones or other personal electronic devices are NOT allowed into the lab during the practical rotations.

## **Complaints Process**

Students with complaints that they deem to be minor (ie, not jeopardizing safety or academic record, for example) should first address them with their direct preceptor and work toward resolution. If resolution is not obtained, students should then bring their complaints to the Program Director. If resolution is not obtained, students should then bring their complaints to the Medical Director. If a resolution cannot be obtained at this point, the Program Director and Medical Director will seek guidance from the Associate Dean and/or Dean, at which point the University process for handling complaints will be implemented.

Students with complaints that they deem to be major (including, but not limited to safety issues, possibility of jeopardization of academic record, discrimination) should be brought to the Program Director immediately. All major complaints will be discussed with Medical Director, and the PA Program Committee where necessary. If resolution is not obtained, the Program Director and Medical Director will seek guidance from the Graduate Studies Chair, at which point the University process for handling complaints will be implemented.

An ombudsperson is also available if a student is not comfortable bringing their concern or complaint to the above mentioned people, and to assist students going through an appeals procedure. Contact information for ombudsperson: [Role of the Ombuds | University of Calgary \(ucalgary.ca\)](#)

All complaints and resolutions will be documented, and will be kept on file with the Program Director.

## **Unforeseen Circumstances Affecting Clinical Placement**

Alberta Precision Laboratories (wholly owned subsidiary of Alberta Health Services) is the main affiliate for the majority of the surgical and autopsy practical training and is responsible for the operation of laboratory medicine in all five hospitals in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. In the unlikely event that placement of the students could not be guaranteed within Alberta Precision Laboratories, the University of Calgary also has an affiliation agreement with Alberta Health Services which owns and operates the majority of laboratories and hospitals in the province of Alberta. Efforts would be made to find clinical placement in one of these hospitals and/or discussions with our affiliation partners in Saskatchewan. In the event that placement was not possible at Regina and Saskatoon then those students would be accommodated within practicum training sites in Alberta. In the event that placement was still not immediately possible due to unforeseen circumstances not directly outlined in the affiliation agreements, the student(s) would remain enrolled in the program until placement could be found. The situation would be discussed with the appropriate parties (students, program committee, University of Calgary and clinical affiliates) and dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

## **Outcome Measures**

In an effort to consistently improve the program, records will be maintained indicating the number of students successfully completing the program. Although not necessary for completion of the program, records of students attempting the ASCP board certification exam and CCCPA-CCCAP certification exam and the percentage successfully becoming certified will also be maintained. This information will be obtained by prompted self-reporting by former students and through the ASCP Program Performance Report. Graduates will be asked to provide their current status with regards to employment, and employers will be contacted to provide feedback to the program on the functionality of the graduate in the workplace. Students will also be

asked to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program that have come to light with their experience as employees. This information will be maintained by the Program Director and used for ongoing development of the program.

## **University Health Services**

**Student health services can be found at**

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/services/health-services>

**Student mental health services can be found at**

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/services/mental-health-services>

## **University Academic Support, Advising and Professional Development**

The University of Calgary offers academic support, professional development and health services to support students through the program. More information regarding these student services can be found here: <https://grad.ucalgary.ca/current/student-services> . Information specifically relating to academic support can be found on

Chancellor Cuthbertson Student Success Centre webpage here:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/> . In addition to these services students are encouraged to communicate with the Program Director and/or Program Administrator. The Program Director can work with the student and/or instructor(s) to help the student successfully move through the various components of the program. Also the program administrator can help the student connect to the many services that are offered by the University of Calgary to help graduate students achieve success.



## SIGNATURE PAGE

- \_\_\_\_\_ I have received a copy of Student Handbook that includes policies and procedures for the progression and completion of the pathologists' assistant program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have read the policies and procedures for Graduate Science Education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am aware that I am to comply by the policies and procedures of the practicum sites in which I am placed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree to comply with the academic and professional requirements stated in this document.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I can fulfill the "Essential Functions" necessary to satisfy program requirements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have read and understand the criteria for failing, passing, progression and graduation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I am required to conform to the standards of safety in accordance with the policies of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and the practicum sites that I am placed.

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Student Name

Signature

Date

*After all questions have been answered, please sign and return this page to the PA Program Director*



*For questions, comments, or feedback on this document, please contact the NAACLS Program Director, Bill Gorday at [William.Gorday@albertaprecisionlabs.ca](mailto:William.Gorday@albertaprecisionlabs.ca) and/or the Graduate Program Administrator at [mpath@ucalgary.ca](mailto:mpath@ucalgary.ca)*